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Who is Jerry Blackwell, the prosecutor in Derek Chauvin's murder trial?

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Prosecutor Jerry Blackwell (Image source: screenshot YouTube/ABC)

As Americans drank in the dramatic scene during opening day of the murder trial of former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin (<https://rollingout.com/2021/03/30/derek-chauvins-lawyer-claims-george-floyd-died-from-drug-overdose/>), urbanites undoubtedly took notice of the Black prosecutor chosen to handle the case being seen around the world.

Nationally renowned and highly decorated attorney Jerry Blackwell has been chosen to lead the state's case. He gave the opening statement, asserting that Chauvin killed George Floyd (<https://rollingout.com/2021/02/02/george-floyds-arresting-cop-derek-chauvin-choked-and-knelt-on-6-others/>) by deliberately kneeling on his neck for 9 minutes and 29 seconds — longer than original reports of 8 minutes and 46 seconds widely disseminated in 2020 — according to CNN.

Blackwell explained to jurors on Monday, March 29, 2021, that Chauvin “betrayed his badge” when he “didn’t let up, he didn’t get up” even after Floyd uttered that he couldn’t breathe 27 times before going silent and motionless.

Chauvin is subsequently facing charges of second-degree murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter.

Blackwell, the founder, CEO and chairman of the law firm Blackwell Burke P.A., was appointed to be a part of the formidable prosecution team, which also includes Keith Ellison, the first Black attorney general in Minnesota’s history.

Actually, Blackwell made the decision to be a part of the state’s case against Chauvin on a pro bono basis, meaning he won’t be compensated for his time and effort, *Newsweek* reports. This shouldn’t surprise his colleagues and members of his inner circle. A self-described “zealous advocate,” Blackwell dreamed of making a difference as a lawyer since he was in the second grade, the Minneapolis-based *Star-Tribune* reported in 2012.

Just last year, Blackwell returned to the national spotlight by securing the posthumous pardon for a Black man named Max Mason, who was falsely convicted and hung in Duluth, Minnesota, for the alleged rape of a White woman in 1920.

Blackwell, who has bachelor’s and jurisprudence degrees from the University of North Carolina, has an illustrious career portfolio. This includes being named Minnesota’s Attorney of the Year, recognized as one of the National Black Lawyers Top 100 and appointed as a fellow to the American Bar Foundation. His firm’s impressive client list includes a who’s who of national and international conglomerates like 3W, General Mills, Cargill, IBM and Shell Oil.

Furthermore, Blackwell is allowed to practice law in five states, as well as before the Supreme Court and Fourth, Seventh, Eighth, Ninth and Eleventh Circuit Courts of Appeals.

Blackwell also is the founder of the Minnesota Association of Black Lawyers and, until 2019, he served as an at-large member of the Minnesota Commission on Judicial Appointments.